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ABSTRACT

This document proposes the adoption of a rules-based theoretical perspective for the study of family interaction. In the first section, Logical and Empirical Requirements, concepts and basic assumptions pertinent to rules theory are considered. The concepts of coordination and determinacy, as used in a rules framework, are explained, and logical and empirical requirements for theory construction are delineated. The second section, Research Interpretations and Applications, proposes the examination of communication as a central family process in order to operationalize family systems theory. Communication is defined and discussed in relation to interrelated family structure, family process, rules theory and systems theory. (WAS)

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AN ARGUMENT FOR ADOPTION OF A RULES-BASED PERSPECTIVE FOR STUDYING FAMILY SYSTEM COMMUNICATION

Part I: Logical and Empirical Requirements

Part II: Research Implications and Applications

by

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The purpose of this paper is to argue that adoption of a rules-based theoretical perspective for the study of family interaction is not merely an option, but a desirability. Building upon the systems approach to theory-building, the paper examines the natural integration of the rules-based approach into the larger framework of systems theory.

RULES THEORY: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The intent of this section will be to lay out the logical and empirical requirements associated with taking a "rules perspective," as well as the assumptions commonly associated with this approach. The discussion will focus on the rules-based approach taken by analytic philosophers in the action tradition, which represents only one of three "branches" of theory associated with a rules paradigm (for a discussion of the other approaches--linguistics and ethnomethodology--see Cushman, 1975).

The Basic Assumptions

Rules theory, a fairly recent addition to the epistemological concerns of the social sciences, is probably better known for what it is NOT than for what it happens to be. In particular, it is not a view of humanity amenable to causal interpretation and analysis.

The rules approach is a natural out-growth of the philosophical perspective commonly labeled "action theory." In particular, action theory makes the following claims: 1) individuals possess intentions which are goal-related; and 2) individuals are capable of making decisions among alternatives based on free choice (Harre and Secord, 1973).

Capella (1972) makes a direct comparison between action and motion approaches in the following paragraph:

> Law-like explanations...treat man as a stimulus-response system; given the stimulus-response law and the appropriate (antecedent) conditions, the response must follow. Now, while granting that a large segment of behavior is habitual, unconscious and unintentional, and, therefore, well-suited to law-like explanations, there exists a second segment... which is purposive and choice oriented and, therefore, poorly suited to law-like explanation. The former behaviors...shall be termed "movements" and the latter, characterized by conscious willed choice among alternatives given a goal, shall be termed "actions" (p. 2).

Differences between law-governed and rule-governed approaches to human behavior may be further differentiated by examination of the syllogisms appropriate to each. In the law-like causal sense, the following conditions must hold:

1) the major premise must be empirically "true:"
2) the minor premise must be empirically "true;" and
3) the conclusion follows logically from the major and minor premises (and may be subjected to empirical test).

In the action or rule-governed case, the syllogism takes the following basic form:

1) the major premise states that the individual intends to do something;
   A intends to do B
2) the minor premise identifies the behavior which the individual believes to be sufficient (although not always necessary) to bring about the desired goal;
   A thinks s/he has to do X to attain B
3) the conclusion is that the individual will (or has) set him/herself to perform the behavior perceived to be required.
   A sets out to do X (von Wright, 1971)

In the rule-governed form of the syllogism, the conclusion does not follow logically from the major and minor premises; it is merely suggested by them. What gives regularity to this form of human behavior is what von Wright and others call "practical force" (von Wright, 1971). This aspect of rules theory will be discussed in depth later in the paper.

Coordination: A Basic Concept

Central to most rules theories cast in a rules framework is the notion of coordination. The term will be used here in much the same way that it is used in the vernacular when expressions are used like "coordinating our efforts" or "coordinating activities." The definition to be used comes directly from the work of Lewis (1974) on convention. In essence, the coordination situation is comprised of two or more people, each with some goal or set of goals in mind, who must work together if any goal is to be reached. Each agent has more than one alternative behavior which is neither sufficient nor necessary to attain the goal, given that the choice behavior of the other agent(s) may make goal attainment virtually impossible.

Lewis (1974) goes on to specify that certain outcomes are "equilibria." That is,

> combinations in which each agent has done as well as he can given the actions of the other agents. In an equilibrium combination, no one agent could have produced an outcome more to his liking by acting differently, unless some of the others' actions had also been different. No one regrets his choice after he learns how the others chose. No one has lost through lack of foreknowledge (p. 8).

In such an equilibrium, each agent is satisfied, although each has had to compromise somewhat. An equilibrium represents a sort of compromise where everyone gets a fair share of the pie; a coordination equilibrium identifies that combination in which everyone gets exactly what s/he wanted without forcing any other agent to take a less desirable alternative (Lewis, 1974).

Two assumptions associated with the notion of coordination should be apparent: 1) coordination requires that agents can and do make purposive choice decisions among alternatives, are capable of anticipating the actions of others (based on information possessed about them or about prior experiences which may serve as precedents), and are capable of evaluating outcomes of their decisions and making adaptations in future encounters; and 2) humans are interdependent in coordination situations.

Coordination situations are especially relevant to a discussion of family communication, because communication of perceptions and expectations may facilitate the coordination process.

Rules Theory: Determinism without Laws

Given the previous discussion of action theory and choice-governed behaviors, location of regularities using a rules theory approach would appear to be a futile endeavor. The prospect is not as formidable as it may appear, however.

Following a basically natural necessity approach to theory construction, rules theorists point to humans as powerful "generative mechanisms" capable of creating regularity out of chaos (Cushman, 1975; Cushman and Florence, 1974; Cushman and Whiting, 1972). In essence, a generative mechanism is a forcing quality which is not directly observable but which may be "tracked" using a marker variable. A simple analogy may be made to a bar magnet and the magnetic field posited to exist around it. Although the field may not be inspected directly, the force of the magnetic field may be examined in relation to its effect on iron filings.

A return to the bases which underly rules theory is in order; consider the practical syllogism:

> A wants to attain X.
> Unless Y is done, X will not be attained.
> Therefore, Y must be done.

Clearly, the syllogism is nondeterministic in this form. Although A may set about to do Y, other circumstances may interfere or s/he may find that Y is not a sufficient condition for X. Furthermore, there is the possibility of multiple sufficient conditions for attaining Y. In this case, choosing among alternatives requires some outside "force" to provide regularity.

Adler (1976) itemized five possible sources of indeterminacy in rules theory. First, there is the very nature of rule-governed behavior: the individual may have faulty information, may choose to disregard a rule consistently or may act unsystematically under the rule. Second, there is the problem with the structure of rules--there are a number of different contexts or circumstances in which the same action may be applicable or the same rule operational. In addition, the number of different actions or rules which may be appropriate for a specific context or circumstance varies. Third, is the possibility of idiosyncratic personal rules or a lack of shared rule knowledge. This problem is especially evident in a heterogeneous population. Fourth, there has been considerable philosophical debate as to the definition of "rule knowledge." Is it sufficient to observe that an individual uses a rule, or must the individual be able to articulate the rule to indicate knowledge? Finally, there is the potential for discrepancies between the "internal logic" of rules theories and the "logic of deliberative behavior." Propositions based on a deterministic "necessity" logic are clearly incompatible with selection among alternatives based purely on "sufficiency" logic, which moves the discussion full circle, back to the original problem of locating the regularity in human behavior.

So, what is a rule? Gottleib (1968) provides a list of the structural components of rules as the following:

> 1) an indication of the circumstances in which the rule is applicable; 2) an indication of that which ought, or may, or must be, or not be concluded or decided; 3) an indication of the type of inference contemplated, whether under the rule it is permitted, required or prohibited; 4) an indication that the statement is indeed designed to function as a rule of inference warrant (p. 39).

Clearly, theories of human behavior can be developed at the individual rule level using the structural components cited above. Theory at this level is totally lacking in generality, because the initial conditions limit the domain to one rule in specified situations.

Two other levels of theory construction are possible: 1) standardized usages (Cushman, 1975) and 2) explication of generative mechanisms.

A standardized usage may be conceptualized as some pattern of behavior (symbolic or physical) which persists over time because it has been found useful in the past for coordinating some activity. Language is a standardized usage to the extent that those individuals fluent in English are able to communicate with one another verbally and are unable to do so with German speaking people. Behavior at an intersection is also related to standardized usages: those cars facing a green light proceed through; those cars facing a red light, stop.

At the highest level of abstraction is the generative mechanism. As mentioned earlier, this concept is borrowed from the philosophical position maintained by "natural necessity" theorists, and is summarized by Harre:

> The relationship between coexisting properties or successive events or states is naturally necessary when they are understood by scientists to be related in fact by generative mechanisms, whose structure and components constitute the essential nature of the permanent things and materials in the world (1973, p. 371).

That is, the natural necessity conception of scientific explanation posits some powerful particular (generative mechanism) which possesses certain forcing qualities capable of impacting upon the environment. Humans are considered by rules theorists to be one such generative mechanism.

The application of the three levels of rules theories to human interaction is straightforward. At the single rules level, discussion centers on distinct rules of behavior

(usually idiosyncratic), such as an individual's "rule" about never leaving the house with the lights on or never wearing shoes in the living room. At the standardized usage level, the focus of discussion is really conventions that link individuals and situations. Conventions will become especially important when the discussion returns to the role of coordination in rules theories. Finally, at the generative mechanism level, the focus is on a search for the forcing quality(ies) which moves people to develop rules of interaction and to repeat them until they become standardized usages.

Coordination: Another Key to Regularity

Returning to the earlier exploration of coordination as a construct for family communication, it should be useful to consider four types of logic which may be associated with the practical syllogism: 1) substitution, 2) systems, 3) motive, and 4) normative/deontic.

Substitution logic is the logic operative when one alternative appears to be no more desirable or necessary than any other. As such, there are no regularities in the behavior; one alternative goal is as good as any other, and one alternative behavior is as good as any other. Not only is it impossible to predict which behavior will be emitted, uncertainty remains as to why any behavior is produced at all.

Under systems' logic, the valued goals are specified, but are never actually reached. Such is the nature of open systems: movement toward a goal results in change in the system and, consequently, modifications of the desired goal. Such a process of movement toward a goal and subsequent change of the goal makes prediction virtually impossible without a thorough knowledge of the structure and functions of the system under investigation.

Under the third form of logic, motive, the practical force comes from within the individual actor. Motive logic deals with human wants, needs, desires and intentions. This is the form of logic until now automatically associated with coordination problems--the one in which one agent is motivated to coordinate with another based on goals established or needs and wants recognized. How badly the agent wants something determines how doggedly s/he will work toward coordination and how much negotiation s/he will tolerate relative to that goal. It does not follow that all agents involved in a coordination problem will be so motivated, however. What does follow is that those individuals who are motivated will attempt to compensate for the others. It would appear possible to create a coordination theory to predict the intensity of the practical force associated with motive logic using two variables: 1) strength of the motivation, and 2) perception of the ease with which the goal may be reached. In those cases where the agent is strongly motivated to reach a goal and perceives the goal to be easily attained, practical force should be strong and the behavior predictable. In those situations where the agent is only somewhat motivated and perceives the goal to require considerable effort to attain, the practical force will be very weak. At one end of the continuum, there is a strong relationship between intentions and behavior; at the other end, behavior will be highly unpredictable.

Finally, it is necessary to consider normative logic. Under this form of logic, the force for regularity is imposed upon the system from the outside. In situations where people run into the same coordination problems regularly, institutions (legal, social, cultural, religious, etc.) have developed behavioral standardized usages for reaching equilibrium, and individuals receive rewards or sanctions based on their compliance with these rules. Countless numbers of such coordination situations could be described. It would appear that the degree to which such situations are more or less regular varies with 1) the number of witnesses to the behavior (how "public" or "private" the behavior happens to be; and 2) the agent's perceived desirability of the reward or severity of the punishment.

It should be clear that interactions between logics are of special importance to coordination problems. Of particular importance are the last two discussed: motive logic and normative logic. Whenever an individual's intentions conflict with normative forces, there is some question as to whether the outside force or personal preference will win out. Other variables, such as number of witnesses, commitment, and the reward/punishment structure come to the fore. However, in those coordination situations in which the motives directly support the normative forces, the behavior regularities should approach lawfulness. Not only

will the agent(s) involved "follow the rules," but s/he will also attempt to motivate the others involved and compensate for them whenever possible.

Logical and Empirical Requirements

To construct a rules-based theory of human action based on an analytic philosophic approach, it is necessary to consider the logical and empirical requirements associated with this approach.

Cushman (1975) presents four logical steps:

(1) identify the practical syllogism associated with the phenomenon of interest;

(2) identify the powers of the generative mechanism;

(3) relate those powers to patterns of observable behavior; and

(4) argue that such a relationship is neither logically nor causally determined (p. 9).

It should be immediately apparent that the logical requirements just described in no way approach the rigor incorporated in the logical requirements specified for other theoretical perspectives. In fact, it would appear that the level of abstraction used at the present time to describe required activities is sufficiently vague to make theory-building a task destined to failure.

A possible elaboration to the original set may include the following:

(1) identify the practical syllogism associated with the phenomenon of interest; determine whether it is in the past tense (explanation) or future tense (prediction);

(2) identify the range of alternatives available and the probabilities associated with each;

(3) identify the relationships of interest and the domain in which they operate;

(4) describe the generative mechanism and the "marker variable" by which it may be tracked;

(5) identify the initial conditions under which rule-following behavior is likely to take place.

Given the lack of precision associated with the logical requirements, it should not be surprising that the empirical requirements fare no better (Cushman, 1975).

> Following...is a very specific method of inquiry. Invention and judgment in this system of inquiry function at two levels of analysis simultaneously. First, a telelogical explanation requires a prior act of intentionalistic understanding of some behavioral act. This understanding can only be achieved by locating the actor's intentions and perceived courses of action. The basic method for achieving such an understanding is the same as the method employed by the grammatical linguist. When such an understanding is achieved the behavioral data becomes a social fact amenable to explanation. Second, a researcher in the action tradition may investigate the interaction of social forces (intentions) and natural forces (causes) in order to obtain knowledge of the best fit between the two....Explanation and control are achieved through a vigorous fusion of observation and practical inference (p. 10).

Certainly, a major part of the problem lies in the fact that rules theory is still in its infancy. It is relatively easy to consider in retrospect those behaviors which have been undertaken many times and to explain the basic operations to others. It is far more difficult to anticipate those requirements which will be of use at some point in the future. Actual construction of rules-based theories should provide clarification of the logical and

empirical requirements associated with this approach. The next section of this paper posits yet another possibility: rules theories may be most heuristic for family theory when associated with systems theories.

It is herein argued that the needs of family theory may best be served by conceptualization of rules and standardized usages as the operators or mechanisms which function to maintain regularity in a given system. Rather than structure an elaborate teleological argument for the appropriateness of either systems or rules to human behavior (part of which has already been done, and part of which hinges on the personal perspective of individual observers), individual systems models will be briefly reviewed and an attempt will be made to demonstrate the potential utility of a rules perspective for each.

With regard to the "applied" general systems model, five logical operations are required: identification of components; specification of relations/structure; determination of processes; stipulation of the environment; and determination of the system's evolution. It would appear that rules or standardized usages would be of theoretical interest with regard to two aspects of the open system: the structure of the system and the processes in which it engages over time. If maintenance of the system is presumed to be a general goal, some coordination is required among individual interdependent components to meet this end. The structure which provides the coordination may very well consist of a set of interrelated rules, a standardized usage which has evolved over time and trials. Likewise, the processes in which the system may engage may well be rule-governed regularities aimed at goal maintenance.

Given the broad scope of the ecosystems model, the range of potential rule-governed behaviors is very large. It would appear, however, that standardized usages develop at the interfaces among systems. That is, given exchange among systems and the transactions which take place, rules could be posited to operate at the interface points to guide the interactive behavior. Further, given certain functions required of the environed unit, it could be argued that behavior within that unit is negotiated, formalized, and eventually becomes a "standardized usage" to permit efficient performance.

Of all the systems approaches, the input/output model would appear to be least appropriate as a framework for a rules analysis. It would appear that rules would be analogous to the "operations" performed on inputs which produce outputs, but, given that the operations (or, at least permanence of specific operations) are of least concern to this approach, rules-based theories should not flourish.

Logical requirements for theory construction using a structural-functional model are as follows: identify the system, goal, traits, and functions which produce value of the traits; specify theoretic ranges for all variables; predict the logical entailments within the theory; and identify normative criteria for choice among alternatives. Since the underlying assumption of this model is one of stability or permanence of the goal state, a rules-based theory could function appropriately within its conceptual boundaries. For human systems, it may be possible to designate standardized usages which function to maintain a certain level of the desired trait, such as coordinated task activities which lead to increased feelings of personal commitment to the family system. In this case, the "coordinated task activities" would be "functions" of the system.

Finally, it is necessary to consider rules within a cybernetic system perspective. In particular, at least three functions of interest operate in a cybernetic system: a mechanism which monitors the environment, sensing and recording changes of importance to the system; a comparator which compares present system status with some desired state; and an effector which operates to make needed changes. Certain guiding principles for behavior--or "rules" of operation--would appear to be necessary for appropriate performance of the system. With regard to the comparator, some criterion must be provoded by which the system state is compared, and some rules of comparison must also be provided. For the monitoring mechanism, some guidelines for operation are also necessary--where to take measurements, how often, what to measure, etc. Finally, with regard to the effector function, some logic must underly the decision-making process in which it engages--whether to activate one system or another, whether to deactive some other set of components, what general changes to make in systems operations, etc. Furthermore, a cybernetic system needs rules about when to

change the rules--criteria by which to interpret deviation amplifying and deviation counteracting feedback. In essence, then, rules may operate in a cybernetic system on two levels; 1) rules are needed to prescribe operations of individual cybernetic functions; and 2) rules are needed to permit changes to be made regarding central features of the system, such as the goal state.

Summary and Conclusions

The previous discussions have attempted to position "rules" as components of individual systems perspectives. The arguments presented take a purely illustrative form, because argument for rules theory as a descriptor of human behavior has been made elsewhere. Furthermore, a concise delineation of all areas of systems analysis compatible with a rules-based approach to theory construction is beyond the scope of this paper.

The major conclusion to be drawn, however, is that systems and rules do not represent "competing" theoretical perspectives. To the extent that regularity may be expected from a rules perspective (based on practical force arising from coordination situations), rules may be expected to reliably operate as "functions" in a wide range of systems models. The level of the rule set of interest--ranging from the individual rule, to the standardized usage, to the generative mechanism--depends on the nature of the phenomenon under study and the assumptions of the systems model employed to study it.

We next turn to a discussion of possible research approaches using a communication rules-based perspective.

A Proposed Research Application

A family organizes itself in and with its environment, develops ways of comprehending, seeing, hearing, understanding, and knowing its environment (Ruben in Ruben and Kim, 1975, p. 169). As a consequence of this process, no two families will view the objects or people in its environment in the same way. What the family becomes is therefore a function of having organized itself in particular ways with the objects and people in its milieu. The family demonstrates equifinality (Galvin and Brommel, 1982, p. 35) and multifinality (Rubin and Kim, 1972) which exist because the sum of a system is greater than the whole. This precludes studying the family from a linear-causal model which examines one variable and predicts how the manipulation of that variable affects another variable. Rather, the family needs to be examined from a systems perspective which allows for mutual causal models, for causation is multiple and reciprocal (Fisher in Ruben and Kim, 1975). While this perspective allows the study of a complex system, it also demands the study to be of all parts of the complex system. It demands that no major variables be left unaccounted. But Broderick and Smith (1979) stated that very little research has been conducted using the systems perspective. Schucts and Hicks (1981) concur with this view and call for more systems research.

In order to conduct research using the systems perspective a central family process must be examined which holistically represents the family system. Since communication is the resource used by the family to maintain boundaries, transform family inputs into family outputs, and interact with other systems, we argue that communication is the principle holistic process which can be examined in order to operationize family systems theory.

The Family as a Rule-Governed Communication System

Communication is the process which forms and structures the relatinships within the family system, the self-concepts of individuals within that system, and the interaction patterns which characterize that system. Bochner defines the family in terms of communication when he states that a family is "an organized, naturally occurring relational interaction system, usually occupying a common living space over an extended time period and possessing a confluence of interpersonal images which evolve through the exchange of messages over time" (1976, p. 382). Book et al define communication as "a transactional, symbolic process which allows people to relate to and manage their environments" (1980, p. 8). "The function

of human communication in this context (interpersonal) is to regulate consensus in order to coordinate human behavior" according to Cushman and Pearce (1977). By coordinating family behavior, communication organizes all other family processes. It represents the integration of the family system.

Communication also manifests the family system itself as Fisher states that the structure and function of a system are visible in communication behavior (in Ruben and Kim, 1975, p. 198). Watzlavick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) suggest that the family's communication represents the family so well that it can be used to analyze the family for therapy. By studying communication, we will be studying the phenomena which represents the family system.

Communication is the transactional, symbolic process of interacting with other people in order to manage the environment. To say that communication is transactional means that when people communicate, they have a mutual impact on each other; the participants reciprocally affect each other's behavior. Thus, in communicative relationships, all participants are both affecting and being affected, simultaneously. Symbolic suggests that communicative transactions symbolize, or stand for, something else. The symbols must be mutually understood for the meanings to be shared. Process implies that communication is continuous and that what occurs during a communicative transaction, as well as the outcomes that accrue from it, are influenced by many factors. Communication occurs within a context, within systems, within relationships which have a history and a future. All of the variables of the context, the system, the relationship, and the history affect the communication transaction. Finally, Managing the environment means to successfully bring about at least some correspondence between the desired and obtained outcomes. Communication is used by people to relate to or control their environments in order to fulfill their needs and wants. Communication also works to regulate consensus in order to coordinate human behavior (Cushman and Pearce, 1977). Communication is the means of reaching consensus and consequently, the means for the family to operate interdependently.

When a person is communicating with another person, there are many choices to make and many communication patterns among which to choose. If this is an initial communication interaction, the selected patterns are likely to be culturally and sociologically normative. On the other hand, as members of a system such as a family interact and share common experiences over time, they tend to have set ways of handling certain situations and in doing so develop their own communication rules.

A communication rule is a followable prescription that indicates what communication behavior is obligated, preferred, or prohibited in certain contexts (Shimanoff, 1980). Cushman and Whiting (1972) suggest that communication rules have two structural components: 1) an indication of that which ought, or may, or must be, or not be concluded or decided; and 2) an indication of the circumstances in which the rule is applicable.

There are also metarules, i.e. rules about rules. Often these are rules about not thinking about or talking about rules. For example, a family may have a communication rule that sex is not discussed. They may also have a metarule which states that no one discusses the rule that sex is not discussed.

As was discussed earlier in this paper, each family organizes itself differently in and with its environment. As a consequence of this process, no two families will have the same communication rule patterns. Families will have communication rules which differ in content and procedure. (See Figure 1: Attributes of Communication Rules) Content rules determine what can be talked about and often to whom what can be said (Satire, 1972). A procedural rule covers how messages are designed or when they are delivered. Content rules and procedural rules can be either explicit or implicit rules. Explicit rules are stated and implicit rules are implied and never discussed openly. Content and procedural rules vary along several dimensions. Some rules are very flexible and easily adapted and others are quite rigid.

Attributes of Communication Rules

type of rule	Flexibility (Adaptability)	Centrality to family values	Function Served	Homogeneity	Specificity and range
content-explicit					
implicit					
procedure-explicit					
implicit					

Rules vary as to what family system function they serve. As rules function as positive or negative feedback, they also serve the functions of:

1. setting and maintaining boundaries,
2. setting and maintaining cohesion,
3. setting and maintaining family themes,
4. setting and maintaining family images,
5. integration and organization,
6. adaptation,
7. regulation of the interaction of the system with its environment.

Rules vary in amount of homogeneity across family members. The homogeneity of a rule refers to the degree to which accurate understandings on standardized usage are evenly distributed among the family members (Cushman and Whiting, 1972). Morris and Hooper (1980) suggest that "rules are propositions of the form: Act A is appropriate in context C" (p. 267) and that homogeneity about a rule appears to have three aspects: 1) consensus about the proposition, 2) consensus about what counts as act A, and 3) consensus about what counts as context C." Homogeneity across family members would indicate agreement among family members on all three of these aspects. Rules may vary in specificity and range. The specificity refers to the number of different actions which are applicable in a particular situation and the degree to which the rule exactly structures what will occur. The range or generalizability of a rule refers to the number of different contexts or circumstances in which the same action is applicable (Cushman and Whiting, 1972).

Although every family has its own unique configuration communication rules, there are similarities among those rule patterns. It is expected that families who could be grouped together on the basis of communication rule attributes would also exhibit other similar traits. For example, it might be found that family systems containing one or more delinquent children would have a large number of inflexible rules which are very specific and low in range, low in homogeneity, and a high number of boundary maintaining rules. It may be pos-

sible to examine family communication rules according to these variables and then predict other family system traits.

Conclusion

Clearly, the research which focuses on the dual perspectives of systems theory and rules theory has not been undertaken to any significant degree at this point in time. Given the natural relationship between rules and systems which we have attempted to identify, we urge family researchers and theorists to give serious consideration to such a dual perspective. It may be that a systematic investigation of family system communication rules will permit a theoretical integration of family system variables more comprehensive than any we have achieved so far.

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